

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children and Families  
Region VI-Dallas, Texas**

**Final Report  
Louisiana Child and Family Services Review  
February 5, 2004**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Final Report: Louisiana Child and Family Services Review**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Louisiana. The CFSR is designed to assess State performance with regard to seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well-being and seven systemic factors regarding the capacity of the State to achieve positive outcomes for children served by the child welfare system. The Louisiana CFSR was conducted the week of September 8, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Office of Community Services, Department of Social Services (OCS/DSS);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2001;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites (Desoto/Natchitoches, Orleans, and St. Tammany Parishes); and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare OCS/DSS personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

A key finding of the CFSR was that Louisiana achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 – The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. OCS/DSS was found to make concerted efforts to ensure that children in foster care are placed, when appropriate, in close proximity to their parents or close relatives and with their siblings. OCS/DSS also was found to (1) promote frequent visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings, (2) preserve children's connections to their communities and extended families, (3) seek relatives as potential placement resources, and (4) support the bond between children and parents while children are in foster care.

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with the other six child welfare outcomes. One area of concern was the State's performance on Permanency Outcome 1—Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 63.3 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. CFSR findings indicate that although OCS/DSS is effective with regard to preventing foster care re-entries, it is less consistent in establishing permanency goals for children and achieving permanency in a timely manner.

Delays with regard to achieving permanency in a timely manner were attributed to State laws and practices regarding adoption and not to court-related barriers. In fact, the CFSR findings indicate that the Louisiana Supreme Court has implemented several practices to

promote the attainment of permanency for children in a timely manner. One practice requires local courts to report all continuances to the Supreme Court; another practice requires the court to prepare compliance reports on cases that exceed allowable timeframes. In addition, stakeholder interviews and case review findings indicate that the courts adhere to the timelines for permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Another area of concern identified during the CFSR pertained to Well-Being Outcome 1—Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 68.0 percent of the 50 cases reviewed. However, the outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 40 percent of the “in-home services” cases. The findings of the in-home services cases were that OCS/DSS was not consistent in meeting the services needs of children and parents; involving parents and children in the case planning process; and establishing face-to-face contact with children and parents with sufficient frequency to ensure children’s safety and well-being.

CFSR case review findings also indicate that the child welfare agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that investigations of child maltreatment reports were initiated within the State-established timeframes. Reviewers determined that in 31 percent of the applicable cases, the response to a maltreatment report was not initiated within required timeframes, and that delays in responding occurred to maltreatment reports with priority classifications of “immediate priority” and “high priority.”

With regard to the systemic factors, the CFSR found that the State was in substantial conformity with all seven factors. Only three of the items assessing the systemic factors were rated as Areas Needing Improvement (items 25, 36, and 39). Assessment of these items determined that (1) OCS/DSS does not consistently involve parents in the case planning process; (2) diligent efforts are not made on a consistent basis to incorporate Tribal involvement in the development of the agency’s annual reports of progress; and (3) the accessibility of key services for children and families varies widely across the State.

The overall findings for the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State’s performance relative to the national standards and table 4 provides information pertaining to the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR.

## **I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES**

### **Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect**

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two indicators. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment for the same children (item 2).

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 87.2 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- Data for 2001, as reported in the State data profile, indicate that the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, and (2) the percentage of children maltreated while in foster care.

A key finding of the CFSR was that in 31 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, OCS/DSS did not respond to a maltreatment allegation in accordance with the State-established timeframes. In addition, the delays in responding occurred to maltreatment reports classified as “immediate priority” (response within 24 hours) or “high priority” (response within 3 days).

Although the CFSR case reviews did not find evidence of frequent repeat maltreatment, as it is measured for the case review instrument (item 2), the State’s incidence of maltreatment recurrence for 2001 (6.8%) reported in the State Data Profile, did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less. Also, in 20 percent of the 15 cases in which there was at least one substantiated report during the period under review, there were 2 substantiated reports within 6 months of one another.

### **Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate**

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the child welfare agency’s efforts to prevent children’s removal from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children’s safety while they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency’s efforts to reduce risk of harm to children.

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 83.3 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

A key finding of the CFSR case reviews was that OCS/DSS makes concerted efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the child (item 4). However, in 61 percent of the cases rated as Strength for item 4, the risk of harm was managed by removing the child from the home. The results of the case reviews indicate that OCS/DSS is not consistently effective in its efforts to protect children while they remain in their homes. In these cases, the primary concern identified was that OCS/DSS does not provide the necessary services to ensure children's safety.

**Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of permanency outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent foster care re-entry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or to ensure that children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 63.3 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.
- Fiscal year (FY) 2001 data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children who achieved reunification within 12 months of entry into foster care, (2) the percentage of children who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placement settings.

However, FY 2001 data provided in the State Data Profile indicate that the State met the national standard for the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of Desoto/Natchitoches cases, compared to 78 percent of St. Tammany cases and 38 percent of Orleans cases.

A key finding of the CFSR case reviews is that OCS/DSS is not consistent in its efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner or achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. However, CFSR findings do indicate that OCS/DSS is effective in preventing re-entries into foster care. Finally, although case reviews found that OCS/DSS makes concerted efforts to ensure

children's placement stability and to reunify children with parents or relatives in a timely manner, the State did not meet the national standards for these indicators, as reported in the State Data Profile.

**Permanency Outcome 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the child welfare agency's performance with regard to (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); (2) placing siblings together (item 12); (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and (6) promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Louisiana achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 90.0 percent of the cases, which is equal to the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance with respect to achieving Permanency Outcome 2 varied across localities included in the onsite CFSR. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of St. Tammany cases and 92 percent of Orleans cases, compared to 75 percent of Desoto/Natchitoches cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that OCS/DSS makes concerted efforts to: (1) ensure that foster care children are placed in close proximity to their parents and/or communities of origin whenever appropriate; (2) place children in foster care with their siblings whenever appropriate; (3) establish sufficient visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care; (4) maintain children's connections to extended family, religion, race/ethnic heritage, school, and friends while they are in foster care; (5) seek and evaluate both paternal and maternal relatives as placement resources; and (6) promote the parent-child relationship while children are in foster care.

**Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

Well Being Outcome 1 incorporates four indicators. One pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second indicator assesses the child welfare agency's efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case

planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworker's contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 68.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

There was some variation across CFSR sites with regard to performance on this outcome. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 79 percent of Desoto/Natchitoches cases and 71 percent of St. Tammany cases, compared to 59 percent of Orleans cases. In addition, the outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the foster care cases compared to 40 percent of the in-home services cases.

The CFSR findings demonstrate that OCS/DSS makes concerted efforts to ensure that caseworkers' contacts with children are of sufficient frequency and quality to meet their needs and ensure their safety and well-being. However, the CFSR findings also demonstrate that OCS/DSS is not consistent in its efforts to meet the service needs of children and families, involve parents and children in case planning, and ensure sufficient contacts between caseworkers and parents. Lack of consistent effort to address these issues was more apparent in the in-home services cases than in the foster care cases. For example, the frequency and quality of caseworker contact with parents (item 20) was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of foster care cases compared to only 59 percent of the in-home services cases. In addition, OCS/DSS was found to meet the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents (item 17) in 90 percent of the foster care cases compared to only 45 percent of the in-home services cases.

### **Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

There is only one indicator for Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to assess and meet the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that 78.0 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Ratings for this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of St. Tammany cases, compared to 74 percent of Orleans cases and 64 percent of Desoto/ Natchitoches cases.

CFSR findings indicated that OCS/DSS is not consistent in meeting children's educational needs.

### **Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

This outcome incorporates two indicators that assess the child welfare agency's efforts to meet children's physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs.

Louisiana did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 72.9 percent of the 48 applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied considerably across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of St. Tammany cases, compared to 68 percent of Orleans cases and 62 percent of Desoto/Natchitoches cases.

This CFSR finding suggests that OCS/DSS is consistent in its efforts to meet children's physical health needs, but is less consistent in making concerted efforts to meet children's mental health needs. A key concern identified pertained to the lack of accessibility of mental health services. Both the case reviews and information from stakeholder interviews indicate that many children in OCS/DSS caseloads have mental health service needs that are not being addressed.

## **II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **Statewide Information System**

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating a statewide information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care.

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The CFSR determined that the State's statewide information system—the Tracking Information and Payment System (TIPS)—readily identifies the status, demographic characteristics, location, and placement goals for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that TIPS produces over 600 reports and has the capacity to deliver on-demand reports (e.g., supervisory reports, financial reports, client



outcomes and aggregate data reports, and program reports) to State, regional, and Parish offices. TIPS also has a “tickler” feature for services and case review requirements, including permanency hearings.

## **Case Review System**

Five indicators are used to assess the State’s performance with regard to the systemic factor of a Case Review System. The indicators examine the development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), the implementation of procedures to seek termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the timeframes established in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 28), and the notification and inclusion of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. CFSR findings indicate that Louisiana provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child no less frequently than once every 6 months and ensures that each foster care child under the State’s placement and care responsibility has a permanency hearing no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. The Statewide Assessment notes that in 2002, the Louisiana Supreme Court issued a set of orders for child welfare cases. Along with mandatory ASFA training for judges, the orders included the requirement that courts must report continuances to the Supreme Court and prepare compliance reports on cases that exceed allowable timeframes.

Stakeholders identified the following OCS/DSS and court-related practices as contributing to timely and productive hearings:

- Having a person who serves as a liaison between the OCS/DSS and court,
- Using court staff to search for absent parents, and
- Adopting the bench book developed by the Court Improvement Program to guide the hearing.

CFSR findings also indicate that the State has implemented TPR practices and procedures that are ASFA-compliant and has a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of foster care children to be notified of, and to have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

The key concern identified with regard to this factor was the lack of consistent involvement of parents in the case-planning process.

## **Quality Assurance System**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System is based on whether the State has developed standards to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30), and whether the State is operating a statewide quality assurance system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Louisiana has developed and implemented standards to ensure that foster children are provided quality services that protect the children's safety and health. In addition, Louisiana operates a multi-faceted quality assurance system that (1) is in place in all OCS/DSS Regions where the services included in the State's Consolidated CFSP are provided, (2) evaluates the quality of services, (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates the program improvement measures that have been implemented.

State-level stakeholders suggested that the State's involvement in the Council on Accreditation (COA) process has contributed to the development of many of the QA procedures and that the QA process has resulted in positive changes in policy and practice, such as greater individualization of service plans and increased focus on safety and health assessments. Stakeholders noted that the CQI and Peer Case review processes have resulted in regional corrective action plans for OCS/DSS and have enhanced individual professional development.

## **Training**

The systemic factor of Training incorporates an assessment of the State's new caseworker training program (item 32), ongoing training for child welfare agency staff (item 33), and training for foster and adoptive parents (item 34).

Louisiana achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The CFSR findings indicate that Louisiana is operating a staff development and training program that supports the State's Consolidated CFSP goals and objectives, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services. Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR reported that the training is effective and prepares new workers to do their jobs. The CFSR findings also indicate that Louisiana requires 32 hours of ongoing training annually during the second and third years of employment. Twenty hours of ongoing training are required annually following the third year of employment. Finally, the CFSR found that Louisiana provides short-term training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or

approved facilities that care for children receiving title IV-E foster care or adoption assistance that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

### **Service Array**

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array addresses three questions:

- (1) Does the State have in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)?
- (2) Are these services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)?
- (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. CFSR findings indicate that Louisiana has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. In addition, it was determined that services can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families. However, the CFSR findings also indicate that not all services are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the Louisiana Consolidated CFSP.

### **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the Child and Family Services Plan (items 38 and 39), and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or federally-assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. CFSR findings indicate that Louisiana engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child and family-serving agencies, and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the Consolidated CFSP. In addition, the CFSR determined that Louisiana's Consolidated CFSP services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. A concern identified with respect to this factor was that Louisiana did not always make concerted efforts to promote the participation of federally recognized Tribes in the annual reporting of progress and services process or to share final Annual Progress and Services Reports with those Tribes.

## **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).

Louisiana achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Key CFSR findings were the following:

- Louisiana has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards and the standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.
- Louisiana complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements for children.
- Louisiana has in place an identifiable process for assuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. The pool of foster/adoptive homes [57.4% African American and 42.6% Caucasian] is a virtual match to the racial composition of children in foster care [58.5% African American and 39.3% Caucasian].
- Louisiana has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children. During the period October 1999 to September 30, 2001, 178 interstate adoptions were realized.

**Table 1. Louisiana CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items**

| Outcomes and Indicators  | Outcome Ratings                   |  |                                | Item Ratings    |                         |                               |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | <i>In Substantial Conformity?</i> | <i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i> | <i>Met National Standards?</i> | <i>Rating**</i> | <i>Percent Strength</i> | <i>Met National Standards</i> |
| Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect             | No                                | 87.2                                   | No                             |                 |                         |                               |
| Item 1: Timeliness of investigations   |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 69                      |                               |
| Item 2: Repeat maltreatment  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 94                      | No                            |
| Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate | No                                | 83.3                                   |                                |                 |                         |                               |
| Item 3: Services to prevent removal  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 79                      |                               |
| Item 4: Risk of harm   |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 85                      |                               |
| Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations        | No                                | 63.3                                   | 1 met, 3 not met               |                 |                         |                               |
| Item 5: Foster care re-entry   |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 100                     | Yes                           |
| Item 6: Stability of foster care placements  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 90                      | No                            |
| Item 7: Permanency goal for child  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 80                      |                               |
| Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, placement with relatives                                  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 100                     | No                            |
| Item 9: Adoption   |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 33                      | No                            |
| Item 10: Other planned living arrangement  |                                   |  |                                | ANI             | 69                      |                               |
| Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved     | Yes                               | 90.0                                   |                                |                 |                         |                               |
| Item 11: Proximity of placement  |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 100                     |                               |
| Item 12: Placement with siblings   |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 94                      |                               |
| Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care                                     |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 87.5                    |                               |
| Item 14: Preserving connections  |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 87                      |                               |
| Item 15: Relative placement  |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 86                      |                               |
| Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents  |                                   |  |                                | Strength        | 95                      |                               |

\*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI)

\*\*\*Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of ANI because although 100% of the applicable cases were rated as a strength the State did not meet the associated national standard.

**Table 2. Louisiana CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well Being Outcomes and Items**

| <b>Outcomes and Indicators</b>  | <b>Outcome Ratings</b>                   |   | <b>Item Ratings</b>                  |                        |                                |                                      |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | <i><b>In Substantial Conformity?</b></i> | <i><b>Percent Substantially Achieved*</b></i> | <i><b>Met National Standards</b></i> | <i><b>Rating**</b></i> | <i><b>Percent Strength</b></i> | <i><b>Met National Standards</b></i> |
| Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs                  | No                                       | 68.0  |                                      |                        |                                |                                      |
| Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents   |  |   |                                      | ANI                    | 72                             |                                      |
| Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning  |  |   |                                      | ANI                    | 67                             |                                      |
| Item 19: Caseworker visits with child   |  |   |                                      | Strength               | 86                             |                                      |
| Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents   |  |   |                                      | ANI                    | 80                             |                                      |
| Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs                        | No                                       | 78.0  |                                      |                        |                                |                                      |
| Item 21: Educational needs of child   |  |   |                                      | ANI                    | 78                             |                                      |
| Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs are met | No                                       | 72.9  |                                      |                        |                                |                                      |
| Item 22: Physical health of child   |  |   |                                      | Strength               | 95                             |                                      |
| Item 23: Mental health of child   |  |   |                                      | ANI                    | 74                             |                                      |

\*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

**Table 3: Louisiana's Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for Which National Standards have been Established**

| <b>Outcome Measure</b>   | <b>National Standard</b> | <b>Louisiana Data</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? | 6.1% or less             | 6.8%                  |
| Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what percent experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members?   | .57% or less             | 0.58%                 |
| Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?  | 8.6% or less             | 7.8%                  |
| Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care?   | 76.2% or more            | 65.0%                 |
| Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care?  | 32.0% or more            | 11.6%                 |
| Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings?   | 86.7% or more            | 83.3%                 |

**Table 4: Louisiana CFSR Ratings for the Seven Systemic Factors**

| <b>Systemic Factors</b>  | <b>In Substantial Conformity?*</b> | <b>Rating**</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>IV. Statewide Information System</b>  | <b>Yes (3)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care  |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>V. Case Review System</b>   | <b>Yes (3)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 25: Process for developing a case plan and for joint case planning with parents                                 |                                    | ANI             |
| Item 26: Process for 6-month case reviews  |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 27: Process for 12-month permanency hearings  |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 28: Process for seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA   |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 29: Process for notifying caregivers of reviews and hearings and for opportunity for them to be heard           |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>VI. Quality Assurance System</b>  | <b>Yes (4)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children's safety and health                                |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements                              |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>VII. Training</b>   | <b>Yes (4)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 32: Provision of initial staff training   |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge.                      |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>VIII. Service Array</b>   | <b>Yes (3)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 35: Availability of array of critical services  |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 36: Accessibility of services across all jurisdictions  |                                    | ANI             |
| Item 37: Ability to individualize services to meet unique needs  |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>IX. Agency Responsiveness to the Community</b>  | <b>Yes (3)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 38: Engages in ongoing consultation with critical stakeholders in developing the CFSP                           |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 39: Develops annual progress reports in consultation with stakeholders  |                                    | ANI             |
| Item 40: Coordinates services with other Federal programs  |                                    | Strength        |
| <b>X. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention</b>  | <b>Yes (4)</b>                     |                 |
| Item 41: Standards for foster family and child care institutions   |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 42: Standards are applied equally to all foster family and child care institutions                              |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 43: Conducts necessary criminal background checks   |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 44: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect children's racial and ethnic diversity    |                                    | Strength        |
| Item 45: Uses cross-jurisdictional resources to find placements  |                                    | Strength        |

\*Systemic factors are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates "Not in Substantial Conformity." A rating of 3 or 4 indicates Substantial Conformity.

\*\* Individual items may be rated either as a Strength or as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).



# **FINAL REPORT OF THE LOUISIANA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Louisiana. The CFSR assesses a State's performance with regard to seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well-being and with regard to seven systemic factors relevant to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families served by the child welfare system.

The Louisiana CFSR was conducted during the week of September 8, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Office of Community Services, Department of Social Services (OCS/DSS);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2001;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites (Desoto/Natchitoches, Orleans, and St. Tammany Parishes); and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare OCS/DSS personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- Twenty-two cases were reviewed in Orleans, 14 in Desoto/Natchitoches, and 14 in St. Tammany.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- Thirty cases were "foster care cases" (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare OCS/DSS and in the custody of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections/Office of Youth Development; and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 20 were "in-home services cases" (cases in which families received services from the child welfare OCS/DSS while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).
- Of the 30 foster care cases, 6 children (20%) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review; 3 children (10%) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 21 children (70%) were 13 years of age and older at the start of the period under review.
- All children in the family were African-American in 34 cases, White in 15 cases, and Native American in 1 case.

- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the primary reason for the opening of a child welfare case was the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 18 cases (36%)
  - Physical abuse – 12 cases (24%)
  - Sexual abuse – 5 cases (10%)
  - Child’s behavior/Child in juvenile justice system – 5 cases (10%)
  - Abandonment – 3 cases (6%)
  - Medical neglect – 2 cases (4%)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 2 cases (4%)
  - Mental/physical health of parent – 1 case (2%)
  - Mental/physical health of child – 1 case (2%)
  - One additional case was opened because the death of a child in the family raised questions about whether the death could be attributed to neglect and whether remaining children in the home were at risk.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 32 cases (64% of cases)
  - Physical Abuse – 18 cases (36% of cases)
  - Sexual abuse – 9 cases (18% of all cases)
- In 23 (77%) of the 30 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

The first section of the report presents CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving the seven outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State’s status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. For the most part, findings are presented for all three sites taken together, with differences among sites described when they are particularly noteworthy. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the findings regarding the seven systemic factors relevant to the State’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.